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The Modern Icarus

Numismagram Newsletter #20 (IV/2019)

It may be April Fools' Day, but news regarding Boeing's recent disasters involving their new 737 Max airplanes are surely no laughing matter. Their subsequent grounding is likely a welcome sight to all of those who fly the friendly skies, at least until further research can be done and the fleet cleared for use. We all, of course, take air travel for granted and it has become a ubiquitous part of our lives, but it was not that long ago that the pursuit of flight was still an unachievable goal. Advancements around the late 19th century/beginning of the 20th century led to an explosion of aeronautical vehicles, one of which was the zeppelin—a rigid-bodied airship pioneered by Ferdinand Adolf Heinrich August, the Graf von Zeppelin, for whom the type of ship would become known...



Given their size and ability to deliver a payload, it is no surprise that zeppelins were utilized during World War I for reconnaissance and bombing campaigns. This was exactly the case, most notably the air raids in Britain, which left over 500 civilians dead...



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Zeppelin use continued to grow during the '20's and '30's, with America even adding some to her arsenal, one of which was the LZ 126, later renamed the USS *Los Angeles*—a ship which was flown to the United States by the then head of the Luftschiffbau Zeppelin (Zeppelin Company), Dr. Hugo Eckener, in 1924. This transatlantic journey was widely celebrated and commemorated on medals such as this attractively toned piece...



(https://shoutout.wix.com/so/7dMdMomb_/c?w=r8cYNG4Ezz-b9tcwyGLqgB-5ipaiIF7LmLuudrq8Y9g.eyJ1IjoiaHR0cDovL251bWIzbWFncmFtLmNvbS9wcm9kdWN0LXBhZ2UvMTA

Zeppelins, however, weren't the only outgrowth during the expansion of air travel, as planes of all types began to be created and improved upon. Air flight in general was becoming safe and much more commonplace, and the hopes of Dædalus, the craftsman in Greek mythology who wished to conquer the challenge of flight, were finally being achieved. According to the myth, Dædalus created for his son, Icarus, wings made from feathers and wax, and warned him against both complacency and hubris—neither to fly too low to the sea, for fear that the dampness would clog the feathers, nor too close to the sun, for fear that the warmth would melt the wax. Icarus ignored these warnings, flying too close to the sun's heat, and then falling to the seas where he would drown, the wax having melted as his father had warned. Throughout antiquity and into modernity, the hubris of man conquering flight remained a challenge, but the 20th century finally provided a sustainable, human response. With Boeing's recent disasters, however, along with questions over the how strong their system of self-policing is, we once again must face the issue of not heeding the warnings against hubris, lest our 21st century forms of flight cause us to fly too close to the sun…



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Turning our sights to later this month, we are rapidly approaching the Christian holiday of Easter, the celebration of Christ's resurrection from the grave after three days, proof of the righteousness of the Christian Lord. Though you'll find neither bunnies nor chocolates, nor even any Easter eggs, you *will* find in this upload a highly attractive medal celebrating this exact occurrence, cast circa 1563 in Bohemia…



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In addition to the pieces above, this upload features a particular focus on aviation-related medals, some gem British coronation medals, a few US expo-related pieces of interest to anyone familiar with early 20th century American coinage, and a few other highly attractive art medals.



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